

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB
SUBJECT: ILO GOVERNING BODY SESSION

REF: (A) GENEVA 3080, (B) GENEVA 3166, (C) GENEVA 3388

1. SUMMARY: THE 205TH SESSION OF THE ILO GOVERNING BODY (GB) MET FEBRUARY 20-MARCH 3. THE GB PLENARY MET FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 3. THIS MESSAGE SUMMARIZES THE PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS. THE CLIMATE OF THE SESSION WAS MILD AND NON-POLITICAL. END SUMMARY.
2. REELECTION OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL (AGENDA ITEM 2): DG FRANCIS BLANCHARD WAS REELECTED FOR A SECOND FIVE-YEAR TERM (SEE REFTEL B).
3. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION (AGENDA ITEM 11): THIS WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEM ON THE AGENDA DEALING WITH SUBSTANTIVE LABOR MATTERS. FOUR REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION WERE APPROVED BY THE GB. MEMBERS OF ALL THREE GROUPS EXPRESSED SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT COUNTRIES WHICH PERSISTENTLY DENY FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND IGNORE ILO EFFORTS TO HALT VIOLATIONS.

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VARIOUS METHODS WERE SUGGESTED FOR STRENGTHENING THE ILO'S ABILITY TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR IN SUCH CASES, INCLUDING CITATION OF A SPECIAL LIST, DIRECT CONTACT AND SUSPENSION OF ILO ASSISTANCE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES. LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WERE SUBJECTED TO THE STRONGEST CRITICISM. THE USSR AND CUBA WERE ESPECIALLY VOCIFEROUS IN CONDEMNING CHILE AND URUGUAY. SOME SPEAKERS, NOTABLY

THE WORKERS, PROPOSED THAT VARIOUS SANCTIONS BE APPLIED INCLUDING SUSPENDING ILO ACTIVITIES IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS URUGUAY, BUT NO CONCRETE MEASURES WERE DECIDED. TUNISIA WAS CITED AS A CASE WHERE AN ILO MISSION HAD BEEN ESPECIALLY EFFECTIVE AND HAD RECEIVED THE FULL CO-OPERATION OF THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT.

4. PROGRAM, FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (AGENDA ITEM 12): THE IMPROVEMENT OF ILO'S FINANCIAL PROSPECTS IS DESCRIBED IN REFTEL (A) REPORTING THE FIRST WEEK OF THE GB SESSION. VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS CONTINUED TO INCREASE DURING THE COURSE OF THE SESSION. THE DG ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 2 THAT ACTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS OR FIRM PLEDGES TOTALING \$4,021,172 HAD BEEN RECEIVED TOWARDS THE TARGET OF \$5.7 MILLION.

5. THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL DECISION DURING THE SESSION WAS TO POSTPONE IMPLEMENTATION OF A REDUCED GENERAL SERVICES SALARY SCALE PENDING AN ADVISORY OPINION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (SEE REFTEL C). THE DECISION AVOIDED (OR POSTPONED) A THREATENED STRIKE OF GS EMPLOYEES.

6. STANDING ORDERS AND THE APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 14): A COMMITTEE REPORT RECOMMENDED THAT THE GB RECOMMEND THAT THE CONFERENCE AMEND ARTICLE 19 OF ITS STANDING ORDERS TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROVIDE FOR A SECRET BALLOT (1) FOR ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AND (2) WHEN REQUESTED BY AT LEAST 90 DELEGATES OR THE CHAIRMAN OF A GROUP. THE GB DECIDED TO POSTPONE A DISCUSSION OF THIS QUESTION UNTIL IT MEETS NEXT NOVEMBER. G-77 REPRESENTATIVES REQUESTED THIS DECISION FOR REASONS WHICH MAY RELATE TO ILO STRUCTURAL REFORM NEGOTIATIONS NOW CENTERED IN THE WORKING PARTY ON STRUCTURE.

7. THE GB ADOPTED A SEPARATE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE INVITING THE DG TO PREPARE A PAPER RECOMMENDING IMPROVEMENTS IN PROCEDURES FOR EXAMINING REPRESENTATIONS UNDER ARTICLE 24 OF THE CONSTITUTION FOR NON-OBSERVANCE OF CONVENTIONS. THIS DECISION DERIVES FROM THE RESOLUTION OF THE 63RD (JUNE 1977) SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE ON STRENGTHENING PROCEDURES IN THE APPLICATION OF ILO STANDARDS. IT IS AN IMPORTANT LINK WITH THAT RESOLUTION (SEE REF A).

8. MEMBERS OF CHIEF INDUSTRIAL IMPORTANCE (AGENDA ITEM 21): THE OFFICERS OF THE GB PROPOSED THAT THE GB INVITE THE DG TO SUBMIT AT ITS MAY SESSION PROPOSALS FOR AP-

POINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE TO PREPARE FOR A DECISION IN
RELATION TO THE VACANCY AMONG THE STATES OF CHIEF
INDUSTRIAL IMPORTANCE RESULTING FROM THE WITHDRAWAL OF
THE U.S. THIS PROPOSAL WAS MADE ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT
NO FINAL ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN TO REPLACE THE U.S. UNDER
THIS PROCEDURE UNTIL NOVEMBER 1978 AT THE EARLIEST.
HOWEVER, THE EMPLOYERS' GROUP SAID IT WOULD AGREE WITH
THE PROPOSAL ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE REPORT OF THE
EXPERTS WOULD BE AVAILABLE BY THE TIME OF THE ELECTION
OF NEW GB MEMBERS AT THE CONFERENCE NEXT JUNE. AN
IMMEDIATE AND STRONG OBJECTION WAS RAISED BY THE REP-
RESENTATIVE OF IRAN WHO ASKED THAT CONSIDERATION OF THE

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MATTER BE DEFERRED. HE POINTED OUT THAT THIS ACTION
WOULD NO LONGER BE NECESSARY IF EXTENSIVE STRUCTURAL
CHANGES NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION WERE AGREED; MOREOVER,
IT WOULD NOT BE A WISE MOVE SO LONG AS THERE WAS HOPE
THAT THE U.S. WOULD SOON RETURN TO THE ILO. THIS VIEW
WAS SUPPORTED STRONGLY BY SOMALIA, VENEZUELA, AND
MEXICO. ONLY BRAZIL AMONG LDC'S SPEAKING FAVORED THE
PROPOSAL. SEVERAL COUNTRIES EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO HAVE
THE U.S. RETURN IN THE COURSE OF THE DEBATE. THE
CHAIRMAN FINALLY AGREED TO POSTPONE THE QUESTION UNTIL
THE NEXT MEETING.

9. IN VIEW OF THE EMPLOYERS EXPRESSED DESIRE TO AC-
CELERATE THE PROCEDURE, THE DECISION TO DEFER THE ITEM
MAKES IT MORE LIKELY THAT THE SEAT WOULD STILL BE
VACANT SHOULD THE U.S. DESIRE TO REJOIN. THE U.S.
OBSERVER DEL WAS TOLD BY AN EMPLOYER REP (POLITES) THAT

THEIR DESIRE TO ACCELERATE A DECISION WAS BASED ON A
DESIRE TO FOLLOW ILO RULES STRICTLY - A POINT ON WHICH
THE U.S. ALWAYS INSISTED WHILE IT WAS STILL A MEMBER.
AS HE INTERPRETS ARTICLE 7 THE FOREGOING PROCEDURE MUST
BE COMPLETED BEFORE AN ELECTION CAN TAKE PLACE. THIS
QUESTION HOWEVER WAS NOT RAISED DURING THE DEBATE.
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10. WORKING PARTY ON STRUCTURE (AGENDA ITEM 22): THE
GB AGREED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MEMBERS OF THE WP SHOULD
MEET APRIL 24-29, FOLLOWED BY THE FULL WP MAY 29-30.

11. COMMENT: THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE GB WAS MILD AND
NON-POLITICAL. THE USSR, WHICH HAD RUFFLED MANY FEATHERS
DURING THE MEETING OF THE WP ON STRUCTURE IMMEDIATELY
PRECEDING THE GB SESSION, INTERVENED MODERATELY AND
RELATIVELY INFREQUENTLY. THEY HAD NOTHING AT ALL TO
SAY ABOUT FILLING THE U.S. VACANCY. THE MOST CON-
TROVERSIAL AND PROBABLY MOST SIGNIFICANT DECISION WAS
TO DELAY A DECISION ON THE NEW GS SALARY SCALE. THERE
THE ADVANTAGE OF INITIATIVE WAS CLEARLY WITH THE STAFF
UNION AND THE SECRETARIAT RATHER THAN THE GB MEMBERS.
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